

Ethics in Pedagogical Research

CSE Teaching & Learning Theme

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Chair, Joint CSE & CSSAHL Ethics Sub-Committee

University Ethics Committee

Overview

- Explore general principles underpinning ethical research
- The University's research ethics procedures
- Implications of this for research in teaching and learning

What is Ethics?

- Tells us how we OUGHT to act in a given situation
- Provides us with STRONG REASONS for doing so

Research with Human Participants

‘Human participants are defined as including **living human beings**, human beings who have recently died (cadavers, human remains and body parts), embryos and foetuses, human tissue and bodily fluids, and **human data and records** (such as, but not restricted to medical, genetic, financial, personnel, criminal or administrative records and **test results including scholastic achievements**).’

Potential Ethical Issues

The subject matter

- Controversial / contentious / sensitive / embarrassing / upsetting subject matter

Matters around researchers

- Potential conflicts of interest for the researcher (funding of the research, exploitation of the data etc.)

Nature of Participants

- Children or young people are involved (under 18)
- Vulnerable people are involved (elderly, physically or mentally ill, people with learning difficulties, in care, bereaved, prisoners, others)
- Participants are your own students or colleagues
- Participants do not understand English / might not adequately understand verbal explanations or written information / have low functional literacy

Participant Recruitment

- Participants may be approached in a public space
- Participation is not voluntary, or there is coercion or incentive to participate
- Researcher or Faculty / Department / University has a financial interest in the project
- The participant may not be able to withdraw from the project
- Deception is involved

Disclosure and Confidentiality

Disclosure

- Participants disclose that they have broken the law

Confidentiality issues

- Covert observation of participants
- Recording or filming / photography of participants (whether covert or otherwise)
- Issues of confidentiality and privacy/ lack of anonymity
- Security of personal data, retention and disposal of data

Risks or Hazards to Participants or Researchers

- Physical or mental risk or hazard
- Fear or pain / distress / discomfort to the participant or researcher
- Taking of samples e.g. blood, saliva
- Physical contact
- Food or drink is to be administered
- Risk to personal safety
- Inconvenience or changes in lifestyle for participants

Research on the Internet

- Recognition of the diverse nature of online environments
- Variance between environments in terms of:
 - public/private-ness
 - modes of communication
 - visibility of participation
 - durability of content
 - sensitivity of topic/content
 - expectations of use/audience
- Complexity of individual environments

University of Leicester Principles

Researchers must:

- ***respect the rights, interests and dignity*** of participants and related persons
- adhere to the ***relevant law***
- normally obtain ***informed consent***
- obtain ***consent without coercion***
- ***protect participants*** from harm
- adhere to the ***principles of academic independence***

Ethics Review -- Purpose

The goal of ethics review is to ensure that *projects are, or can be modified to become, ethically acceptable*. It will consider whether the project:

- will properly protect research participants
- is properly planned, taking into account the local context, and effectively reviewed on scientific and ethical grounds. (In short, ethics committees ensure that the project is consent-worthy before any potential research participants are invited to participate.)

Ethical Committee Concerns

- Informed consent
- Care and protection of participants
- Scientific design and conduct
- Protection of confidentiality
- Recruitment

Risks

- Risks of participants being misled, lack of disclosure
- Violation of confidentiality
- Violation of dignity or respect
- People being prevailed upon
- Emotional risks
- Threats to physical safety
- Risks of coercion

Key Questions to Consider

- Are participants aware of what is being asked of them?
 - What will the research process involve?
 - What are the reasons for their participation?
 - How and to whom will the research findings be reported?
- Is the participant competent to make their own decision regarding participation?
- Are the participants taking part voluntarily?
- Do the participants fully understand this information?

Consent

Valid consent comprises 3 elements:

- Adequate information (hence, ‘informed’ consent)
- Voluntariness (not coerced or manipulated)
- Competence and/or autonomy (can be undermined e.g. by severe cognitive impairment)

Informed Consent

Participants should know:

- that the research is taking place
- what the focus of the research is
- what the risks of the research are (if any)
- what the data gained from the research will be used for
- what they will be asked to do
- that they can change their mind concerning their involvement at any time
- the degree of confidentiality and anonymity they will be afforded.

Other Aspects of Consent...

Consent need not be individually negotiated for:

- Observation in public places*
 - Movements through open public spaces like parks
 - Visitor movements through museums
- Using data in the *public* domain
 - e.g. census, household survey

Consent negotiated post-event in:

- Research necessitating deception/ covert research
 - Consent should be obtained afterwards if possible

*Permission might be required from proprietors/trustees of secured public spaces.

Ethical Approval of Student Work

‘Students who fail to seek appropriate approval prior to commencing their work, or who fail to consult with their supervisor regarding major changes to their work once it has commenced, will normally be regarded as having breached the University’s Regulations and will be referred to the Registrar and Secretary for consideration under the terms of the Code of Student Discipline’.

No research with human participants can commence until it has had ethics approval.

Any liability for supervisors/ethics committees?

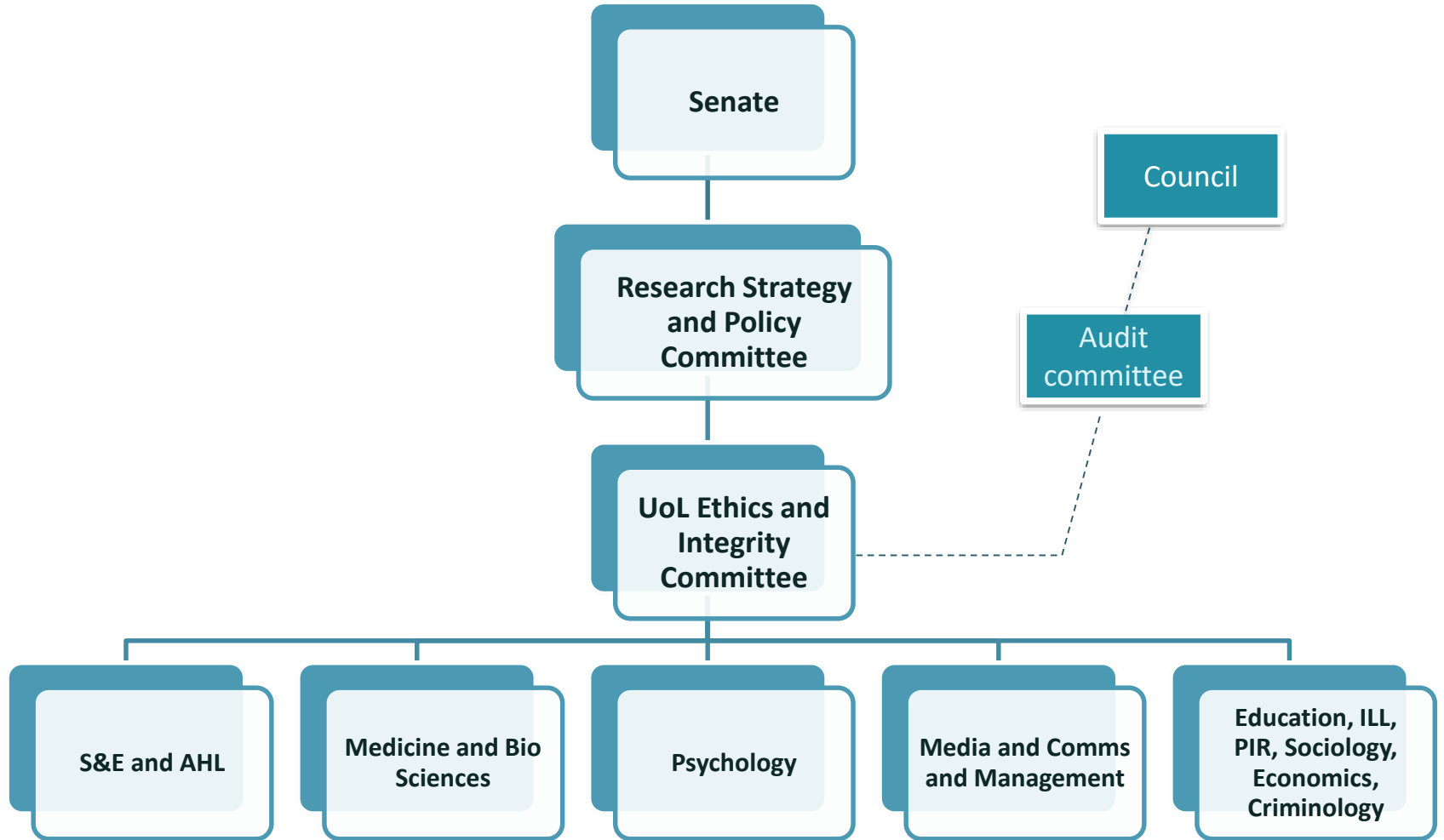
Supervisors covered by University Insurance for all ethics review decisions made in good faith (follow clear instruction and due process).

- Examine methodology being employed
- Consider safety of researcher and participants
- Identify what might be missing from application

Criteria to be Applied...

The project should be considered in terms of:

- the ethical issues raised (e.g., whether the method of recruitment proposed puts undue pressure on individuals to participate);
- the way these issues are addressed.



New System

- All **PGR** and **staff** applications go to the relevant ethics sub-committee (at least two pairs of eyes will look at each application);
- **UG** and **PGT** applications can be approved by the supervisor/authorising supervisor (provided they have had ethics training and are on the system) unless there is a conflict of interest. If more than minimal risk, consult Departmental Ethics Officer.

Joint College Ethics Sub-Committee

Science and Engineering and Arts Humanities and Law Research Ethics Sub-Committee

Prof Paul Cullis (Chair)

Prof Mandy Burton

Dr Elizabeth Hurren (Deputy Chair)

Dr Richard Thomas

Dr Giasemi Vavoula

Dr Matias Ison

Prof Martin Phillips

Dr Effie Law

Mr Stuart Dawkins (Lay member)

Administrator: **Kathy Baddiley**

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In cases where your Departmental Ethics Officer is not available, you may also seek advice regarding ethical issues from a member of the [Science and Engineering and Arts, Humanities and Law Ethics Sub-Committee](#).

* Department does not have a dedicated Departmental Ethics Officer. Ethical issues arising from research should be raised with the Head of Department/Head of Research (listed) or the Chair of the [Science and Engineering and Arts, Humanities and Law Ethics Sub Committee](#).

New Processes

- To submit an application using the new system, staff and students will need to complete an online form on the new portal: <https://ethicsapp.le.ac.uk>. (Help available on 'help' tab at the top of the screen.)
- If you have questions on the new online system please email ethicsproject@le.ac.uk
- General ethics-related queries may be sent to ethics@le.ac.uk